



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff **Scott Smith** Chief Deputy

April 2015 Sheriff's Column

Be Courteous to others on the Roadways:

Summer is right around the corner. It's that time of year for summer sports, parties and family reunions. It's a great time of year to get out and enjoy the warm weather and the many festivities we have in Dodge County. When we go to work, the grocery store or to these other events, many times other people we share the road with can negatively set our mood. "Road Rage" can not only affect our mood, but it is also dangerous to the motoring public.

With that in mind, I thought I would ask your cooperation with a couple of behaviors we all have seen which can be considered instigators of road rage. One of the most common things that I see is on 4 lane highways like Highway 151. State law requires that slower traffic must keep right when traveling on highways with 2 lanes or more traveling in the same direction. Often times you will see someone traveling in the left lane for miles. Cars then approach from the rear and begin tailgating or weaving dangerously through the different lanes. I am often told that those people shouldn't be going that fast anyways. While that may be true, it is not the responsibility of the public to slow these individuals down. In fact by trying to be that road block, you may in fact be creating a more dangerous situation than had you just let them be on their way. As a result, the "road rage" and other dangerous driving may soon follow. My advice to you is to courteously follow the law and drive in the right lane as often as practical and allow that traffic to go by.

Other forms of "road rage" are often a result of people who are traveling slower than the speed limit. I will start off by saying there is nothing wrong with that and we always encourage people to operate only at speeds they feel comfortable with as the law allows. However, if you choose to travel at these slower speeds, you do have some additional responsibility. Wisconsin law requires that if any one impedes the flow of traffic by slow speed, it is their responsibility to yield the roadway and allow that traffic to go by. This applies to all vehicles including cars, trucks, bicycles and even farm machinery. A simple gesture of courtesy by pulling over and allowing traffic to go past can help to alleviate the road rage of others.

There are many others that we could talk about and we will highlight many of them in our monthly laws of the month.

Finally, I would like to talk about that person that cuts you off, failed to use their signal light or blatantly violated the law in front of you. You can avoid "road rage" by doing a couple very simple things. First, take a deep breath and relax. You will still get to where you need to go. Next, remember the license plate and safely report the violation to law enforcement. Finally, let them go on their way without retaliation. In the end, "road rage" places you, your passengers and others in the motoring public at risk. Our highways can already be dangerous enough. Adding anger and retaliation is like adding fuel to a fire.

I encourage everyone to always drive carefully and courteously. Help our law enforcement officers in making sure our families make it to their final summer destination safely. Also help us in keeping Dodge County a safe place to live, work and visit.

Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt